

The Parable of the Two Athletes

The President of the country called on certain citizens to select the best athletes for the upcoming world Olympics. He instructed them to find those that had the most ability and to prepare them for this most important event. They needed to be the strongest and the swiftest. After all, in a few short years they would be representing the President and all the people of the land.

Assignments were made. There was the Chairman of the Selection Committee, the trainers, the running and endurance coaches and many others specifically chosen to prepare these athletes. The performance of the athletes had to be at the highest level possible. The Chairman of the Selection Committee designated two athletes to come into the program. One was Bill and the other Bob. Both were well-built and showed great potential. The President and all the staff were excited for the possibilities of these two young men.

The Chairman explained that the preparation would be demanding but also very rewarding to eventually represent the country. To be able to successfully compete they had to reach certain levels of performance. He also explained how they had selected some of the best coaches and trainers in the land to assist them. They had every tool and piece of equipment needed to accomplish their goals.

From the beginning it was evident that Bill was willing to slowly and gradually ease himself into the program. He would be heard to say, "the competition is a long ways off." Bob, on the other hand, began a steady and consistent regimen of exercises to help him reach the goals he and the trainers set for him. He would be heard to say, "to compete I will have to be at my very best."

Bill knew the contest was years ahead of him. There was time for training later. Right now was the time to have fun. Bill would show up late for training or sometimes not come at all. If he was out late the night before, he did not feel like being at the training center the next morning. If his friends wanted to go somewhere he would leave practice early. He was simply going through the motions to keep the trainers off his back. He deviated from his prescribed diet and would take into his system things that altered or changed his thinking and ability. His music was loud and offensive to his trainers. His appearance was sloppy and untidy like his friends. He did not look the part of an athlete.

Bob; put every ounce of effort into his training. He carefully listened to his coaches and trainers. At times he would come early to practice. He would run extra laps or lift more weights to maximize his performance. He was careful to eat healthy foods and in moderation. His clothes were designed for training and to help reinforce his image as an athlete. Bob had a plan to qualify for the world competition and believed he needed every day to prepare.

The Chairman monitored their activity. He even met with each athlete to encourage them on in their training. Bill would lead the Chairman to believe that things were progressing

the right direction. However, the chairman could see that some thing was wrong. Meanwhile, Bob would look the chairman straight in the eyes and share with him his progress and aspirations to do better.

The day to submit the team roster soon arrived. The Chairman of the Selection Committee met with Bill and asked him to account for his years of training. Bill spoke of how hard he had worked and how excited he was for the event. However, when the Chairman reviewed his progress and performance charts, he was well below the necessary requirements. When the Chairman met with Bob, he immediately saw the results of his preparation. Not only did his charts and reports show amazing performance, but he could see it in his whole being and appearance.

Bill was asked to stay behind from the competition. He was sad but understood that his lack of training left him short of the mark. There were many things he could do to assist the program while staying at home. Bob felt a sense of joy and happiness like never before. His trainers and coaches complimented him on his hard work. It was a day of accounting and he was found qualified for one of the most important competitive events in the world.

This parable is a simple story with a simple message:

**THE BAR HAS BEEN RAISED
AND THAT'S THE WAY IT IS!**